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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [SOCI](#) [PINR](#) [SG](#)
SUBJECT: Ivorian Reggae Star PNGed from Senegal

REF: Dakar 2287

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Famed Ivorian Reggae star, Tiken Jah Facoly, was recently declared persona non grata in Senegal after commenting that if President Wade loved his people, he should step down from power. This decision once again spotlights the arbitrary nature of Senegal's judicial system and brings into question the extent of freedom of speech in Senegal. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) During a concert on December 12, Ivorian reggae star Tiken Jah Facoly told a rapturous audience that Wade should leave power and that if he does not want his son, Karim, to be questioned by the National Assembly he should leave him at home (Ref A). Facoly, well known for his attacks against African leaders he sees as corrupt, was subsequently declared persona non grata in Senegal by the Interior Ministry for his "insolent and discourteous" remarks and was barred from ever entering the country again. This decision was taken on the personal initiative of hard-line Interior Minister Ousmane Ngom. In an interview, the Minister tried to justify the decision by saying that people cannot just come to another country and speak out against a sitting president. He then went on to say that they could have taken more draconian measures but chose not to and that Facoly needed to write a letter to the Senegalese authorities to apologize for his actions. In an interview, Facoly said he had been surprised by the decision, saying he had always considered Senegal a democratic country where freedom of expression was valued.

Comment

¶3. (SBU) Declaring Facoly persona non grata is a worrisome development as it comes on the heels of the arrest (and subsequent release) of numerous journalists who were critical of President Wade, leading to questions about the direction Senegal is taking especially as far as freedom of expression is concerned. Furthermore, Facoly's Reggae music is very popular among youth throughout West Africa. His taking President Wade to task during what are politically difficult times for the Wade government most likely triggered a frightened, knee-jerk reaction from the Minister of the Interior who has shown himself to be zealous in protecting the President. Another interesting question is how this latest incident squares with Senegal's commitment to the concept of freedom of movement as enshrined by both the ECOWAS charter and Senegal's pan-African constitution.
SMITH